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## THE MODERN JEW AND HIS SYNAGOGUE.

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The original Synagogue in its relation to the Temple on the one hand, and to the Christian Church on the other, is an interesting and important subject, although a difficult one. While deferring a thorough treatment of it to some future time in order to give to it more reading and thinking, yet I venture in the opening of this article to make the following statements, each of which is capable of proof.

(1) Until the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem in the year A. D. 70 the Jewish Synagogue was nothing more than a school in which the reading and interpretation of the Old Testament were taught. Taking the New Testament writings, Josephus and Philo the Jew as our guides, one can discover no function in the primitive synagogue but that of teaching.

(2) After the Temple was destroyed the prayers and songs used in the service of that building were transferred to the synagogue, so that ever onward from that date the synagogue has been used for worship as well as for instruction. The Jews of the present day have in some instances a separate building. Without pointing out any of the consequences of these provable propositions, we may proceed to the subject placed at the head of this article.

During my last holiday I spent the month of Tishri among the London Jews, visiting them in their homes, attending the ordinary synagogue services and the feasts of that month. It is my aim in this paper to give an account of some of the things I saw and heard during the month named. Before doing so I crave permission to say that I received from Jewish rabbis and other Jews every possible courtesy; and no one I asked was unwilling to give me any desired information if it was in their power.

## THE SYNAGOGUE BUILDING.

The modern synagogue is as a rule very plain. I have never seen one in the East or the West that could strictly be called grand. The most handsome I remember seeing were in Amsterdam and Berlin. The Jerusalem synagogues are singularly humble looking. In entering you will find that in England and America the door invariably faces the East, and this for the simple reason that Jerusalem is in that direction. It is on the same principle that Mohammedan mosques always point to Mecca. Neither the synagogue nor the mosque looks towards the East as such, but to the original headquarters of each religion. Jewish and Mohammedan places of worship, if erected to the East of Jerusalem or Mecca, are built towards the West and not towards the East. It will be seen at once that the so-called "Orientation" of Eastern and many Western Christian churches has no support in the practice of Jews or Mohammedans; it is rather, I suspect, a remnant of the ancient Zoroastrian (modern Parsee) habit of worshipping, or (as some Parsees now say) worshipping "towards," the rising sun.

After having reached the interior of the synagogue one comes at first upon the poorest seats, and these are kept for the poorer people. Beyond these is the platform from which the Scriptures and the prayers are read. Next to the platform are the best seats, those occupied by the elders of the synagogue. In the very end—the extreme East—of the building there is a recess in the wall, covered by a veil. This recess is called *Tebah 'Arôn* or *Hékhal*, and it answers unquestionably to the "most holy place" of the ancient Temple. In the *Hékhal*—its commonest name—are kept the parchment rolls of the Hebrew Scriptures wholly written with the hand and without vowels—this last a proof that the written vowels do not form a portion of the original Hebrew writing. The Qurans read in the Mosques must also be written by the hand, but in this case the vowels are carefully inserted to prevent any mispronouncing or misconceiving of such an important revelation.

On each side of the building looking East there are open

seats, not greatly unlike our pews. These seats go from West to East, the men on the left hand facing those on the right. Underneath each person as he sits is a box containing his Talith, prayer books and Hebrew Bible. Each Jew upon reaching his seat—which is numbered—takes out what he requires from the box and then sits or stands as the service requires. For the seat and the box a rent is paid, and each is kept by the same person. In some cases I inadvertently sat in a place which a later comer claimed as his. But I received in such and in all other circumstances the utmost kindness from Abraham's sons, and, after having obtained what they wanted from the box I was invited to keep the seat, unless it was the feast of the Atonement or Tabernacles when every seat was claimed, and every part of the building was occupied.

On each side, except the East, there is a gallery which the women use, but the weaker sex seemed to me to be silent spectators having no phylacteries or Talith, and joining in neither the singing nor the prayers. In the East women are partially concealed from men by lattice-work, but in England generally the galleries are open. This separation and—shall I say?—degradation of the female sex is quite Oriental. I noticed it in the Coptic Cathedral at Cairo and even in the American Presbyterian mission services of my friend Dr. Lansing, of the same city. I saw it in the Armenian services at Jerusalem. The Jews base this practice in their case upon Zechariah 13 : 12–14, where the words “their wives apart” occur five times. In the oldest synagogues as in the one found at Capernaum there was no gallery, the women having to sit or stand in open spaces to the right and left of the men. These spaces would answer to the women's court of the Temple. Mohammedan women never attend the Mosques at all.

I have said that the rolls are kept in the *Hékhal*. These rolls are wrapped in linen cloths called *mitpakhoth*, and kept in a case called *Tiq*. The rolls are too sacred for even the Rabbi or *Khazan* to touch, so each synagogue provides a golden or ivory hand and finger with which the reader points instead of using his own finger.

In front of the veil covering the *Hékhal* there is a lampstand answering to the golden "lampstand" not golden "candlestick" (candles were unknown in Bible times). In the opposite—the Western, end of the synagogue there is the ever-burning lamp, representing the Shekinah of the Temple.

The *Bema* occupies the position of the altar of burnt offering which stood at the entrance of the Temple. Upon this the prayers, which do duty for the Temple sacrifices as well, are presented. After the overthrow of the last Temple sacrifices ceased to be offered since there was no command to offer them anywhere but on Mt. Moriah. It is singular and significant that though the Jews themselves have abandoned the sacrifices since the loss of their Temple and its altar, (the fowls killed on the day of Atonement form a possible, but an improbable exception), yet some branches of the Christian church retain sacrifice in some form.

#### THE DAILY LIFE OF AN ORTHODOX JEW.

After awaking in the morning the very first thing the Jew does is to thank God for restoring his soul to him, the soul being supposed to leave the man during sleep.\* During this prayer he is strictly forbidden to utter God's name in any form, because before washing the person is unclean. The first article worn is the '*Arba' Kanphóth* (four corners) or *Talith Qatón* (little Talith). This garment every Jew wears next his skin wherever he happens to be, for his religious and even his physical well-being depends upon his having the "fringes" which hang from the four corners about him. These "fringes" or tassels are those commanded by Moses (Deut. 22: 11, 12), and they are the same for the small Talith as for the large one (*talith gadhól*). In fact the small Talith is a mere substitute for the other, and is worn that the wearer may by no possibility die without having the fringes on—unless in bed when they are not to be worn at all. Then the orthodox Jew proceeds to wash himself, which he begins to

\*For the very words of this and other prayers see the Jewish (Hebrew) prayer books—either that of the Sephardim (Spanish and Portuguese) or that of the Askenazim (German and Polish) Jews.

do by pouring water three times over each hand, first over the right, then over the left in order to drive away the evil spirits supposed to hover about the hands during the hours of sleep. The face is then washed, but before wiping he joins the palms of the hands together and says: "Lift up your hands to the sanctuary and praise the Lord." After wiping he says another prayer.

Then he has to say his morning prayer. If he does this at home he puts on only the Phylacteries; if he goes to the synagogue to say prayers he puts on the Talith as well. These phylacteries or Tephillin (so-called because worn during prayer) are square leather boxes containing parchments with these passages written on them in Hebrew, Exod. 13: 1-16; Deut. 6: 4-9; 11: 13-21. One of these is attached to the forehead, while the other is fastened to the left arm. "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." (Deut. 6: 8, 9). The latter part of these words they carry out by putting a similar parchment into a small wooden, glass or tin tube, and fastening it on the right side of every door in the house. They call this last a *mezuzah*.

In the synagogue with Phylacteries and talith; in the home or elsewhere with the Phylacteries alone, every Jew is bound to say for morning prayers at least the *Shema'* and the *Shemoneh 'esreh*. The *Shema'* embraces the following portions of Scripture; Deut. 6: 4-9; 11: 13-21; Numbers 15: 37-41. It receives its name from its first word. The *Shemoneh 'esreh* or "eighteen prayers," also called *'amidah* because said standing, embraced originally eighteen benedictions or prayers, but in later times a nineteenth was added though the name remains unaltered.

Besides morning worship he will have to observe afternoon service before sunset, and evening service after it. For convenience these two services are united. In the first these so-called "eighteen" must be said, as it must also be said at evening prayer. The *Shema'* need not be said before sunset. Jews rest their practice of praying three times daily upon Ps. 55: 18 and Daniel 6: 10. Other prayers are added, but those named are indispensable.

On Mondays, Thursdays New-moon day, Sabbath and on Festivals readings from the law and from the prophets form part of the service. Moses is said on a Thursday to have ascended Mt. Sinai in order to appease the Divine anger, and on Monday he returned. Hence the special sacredness of these days.

Our orthodox Jew having thrice said his Shemoneh 'esreh and twice his Shema' returns to his home, if he is not already there. Before going to rest he has a private prayer to offer and then his day's work is over, and who can deny that, if he be a busy man of the world, and has discharged his religious duties, he has well earned his night's repose!

Before quitting the daily life of the Jew and the daily service of the synagogue a few words seem advisable regarding the Talith. It is a long garment made of white sheep's or lamb's wool. One which I possess is 7 feet long by 5 feet three inches broad.\* There are near each end six blue stripes, and at each of the four corners is a so-called "fringe" but which I prefer calling "tassel." This "tassel" or "fringe" is like the body of the garment white, though originally one of deep blue thread was mixed with the white ones, the "white" symbolizing purity, the "blue" pointing to the heavenly origin of the commandments. At the present time the blue thread is not inserted, the blue stripes it may be doing duty instead. It is probable that the "blue ribbon" of Teetotallers was suggested by the "ribband of blue" in Num. 15:38. A "thread of blue" or, as in R. V., "a cord of blue" would however be a more accurate translation.

#### SABBATH DAY.

There is no Jewish festival more highly regarded than the Sabbath, with the solitary exception of the *Yom Kippur* or Day of Atonement. Circumcising a child is the only kind of labor then permitted; and this is allowed because it is a religious ceremony. On that day no fire can be lighted or put out, and therefore no food can be cooked. Business must

\* A smaller one I have is 6 feet 6 inches long by 2 feet and 7 inches broad. This is for the unmarried.

not be talked about, burdens must not be carried. Traveling by land or water is forbidden. No musical instrument is to be played, nor must even the dead be interred.

The Sabbath begins as, in the East all other days do, at sunset, i. e. in the evening and not in the morning in accordance with Genesis 1., "And the evening was, and the morning was." Every good Jew will go, if at all possible, to the synagogue to attend the combined afternoon and evening service which begins an hour before sunset. The prayers are similar to those of the other days of the week with appropriate additions. I was deeply impressed in the London synagogues by the beautiful words and the charming melody of the "*Lekhā dhodhi*" or Sabbath welcome song. In this the Sabbath is welcomed as a bride, "Come my friend to meet the bride."

The Sabbath evening service over I was invited more than once by a learned Jewish Rabbi to dine and spend the evening at his home, and I will here briefly relate what I saw. Before arriving the housewife has already kindled the Sabbath light, a brazen seven-armed lamp, the seven branches standing for the seven days of the week. As soon as the seventh wick is lighted, the Sabbath has fully begun and Sabbath regulations must be observed until the *Habhdalah* has been done. But if no fire and no cooking are allowed, how can the dinner be prepared? Every Jew who can, engages at least one Gentile servant. Among the poorer class a number of families join to keep one such servant between them. Though the Jew is strictly forbidden on the Sabbath to do any manner of work, he is quite at liberty to engage a non-Jew to do his work for him. One Sabbath in September last I was visiting a Jewish Rabbi at a time when he particularly required to write a letter to Dr. ———. As delay might involve serious consequences he entreated me to write his letter. Of course I readily consented. I had promised to call upon a Jewish elder (not a Rabbi) at the close of a Sabbath. I arrived before the ceremony of *Habhdalah* had been performed, and the Gentile servant was not at hand. I was received kindly and conducted into a drawing room, but there was hardly any daylight and yet no one in the house



except myself could light a match, or candle or gas. At length after a little manifest embarrassment Mrs. A. said to me as she guided me to the matches, "Will you, Mr. Davies, take up this match-box and light the gas." This I did: we had a little talk: then *Habhdalah* (Sabbath separation,) was completed and all the family was free to perform affairs of this world.

But I have wandered from our Rabbi's home. Upon reaching the house each child runs to the father for his *Qiddush* or blessing, after which they and the mother sit around the table while the father blesses the wine (*Kosher*, pure and as my Rabbi told me—a teetotaller—unfermented), and passes it around. Then he stands at the head of the table, two long cakes or rolls lying on a plate before him. These represent the double quantity of manna gathered before the Sabbath, and the pure white muslin which covers them represents the dew which, on each day, fell with the manna. He gives a portion of these rolls to every member of the family. Before distributing the wine and bread a "Qiddush" or blessing was sought in each case. It was impossible not to be reminded of the Lord's Supper in the Christian church, and of the Jewish Passover. This being over a dinner of several courses is served—fish forming a part in almost every Jewish Sabbath evening dinner, a reminiscence of the fish eaten in the land of Egypt. There is a "Qiddush" after as well as before meals.

About 10 o'clock next morning there is a well attended service, during which, besides the usual and some additional prayers, the Scriptures in Hebrew are read, by the Rabbi or his substitute, the *Khazan*, or by men specially called to the *bema* for the purpose. There is now a large number of synagogues in which sermons are preached either occasionally or regularly. Preaching in the synagogue began in Germany some seventy years ago, but it soon spread to England and other countries. In 1862 the only London Jewish ministers who preached regularly were Rev. Professor D. W. Marks (my first Hebrew teacher) and the late Rev. A. L. Green. At the present time (1891) there are over six Jewish ministers in London who preach weekly or fortnightly, and several

others preach at greater intervals. In the English provinces too the practice of preaching has grown and is growing.\* In the earliest times a sermon or address upon the *seder* or portion read was an inseparable part of the Sabbath service, but the constant encroachment of the liturgy soon made the sermon or address impossible.†

Before and after sunset there is a combined service as on other days with prayers of a special kind in addition.

When the stars begin to come out the Sabbath is ended, but no Jew is allowed to return to his duties until he has made the *Habhdalah*. The ceremony of the *Habhdalah*, as I saw it, is as follows:—a boy or girl or the housewife (generally the youngest present besides the head of the family) holds a wax candle in each hand. The father or husband holds in his right hand a glass of wine, and in his left a box of spices. He reads or chants a prayer thanking God for dividing things sacred from things profane, light from darkness, Israel from all the other nations of the earth. While he is thus engaged he moves the spice box from the left hand to the right and sprinkles some of the wine upon the table. Now the Sabbath is at a full end, but the longer the sacred day is extended the greater the merit, for Jewish orthodox belief holds that during the Sabbath wicked spirits suffering in hell are transferred to heaven, and in heaven they remain until the separation is made between things sacred and things profane.

\* See *Jewish Quarterly* for October 1890, article by Mr. Morris Joseph.

† See Herzog's *Real-Encyclopädie* 1st edition, article by Dr. Leyrer on "Synagogen der Juden" p. 311.

(To be concluded.)